

## **ANNUAL TOWNS' MEETING - 2022/23**

### **Annual Report of the Town Council**

#### **Cllr Keith Craze, Chairman / Mayor**

Welcome to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Towns' Meeting since inception of the Town Council in 1979, noting we could not hold an Annual Towns' Meeting in 2020 due to Covid.

The Annual Towns' Meeting is a public meeting required by statute to be held in the period between 1 March to 1 June (inclusive) each year, but it is not a Town Council meeting. It is in effect a local residents' meeting at which any elector for the town area may speak, at the discretion of the Chairman, on matters of direct concern to the town.

This year, because of elections on 4 May, we are holding the Annual Towns' meeting a little earlier than usual, due to the Pre-election period (Purdah) from 20 March 2023.

Over the years, the Annual Town's meeting has evolved from one where the Chairman presented his Annual Report about the Town Council looking back, into one that looks forward, recognising the hard work of both local organisations and charities, particularly the efforts of individuals with the Award of Citizen of the Year.

**As Chairman**, my report covers the work of the Town Council in general, plus some wider reaching matters in our community. I signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office on 9 May 2022. My initial term of office began on 6 May 2021 at a "virtual on-line" Annual Meeting, permitted under Govt emergency legislation at that time.

**At our 9<sup>th</sup> May AGM**, the Town Clerk referred to the one item of correspondence being an e-mail from Cllr S Davies in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for the Environment & Coastal Services at NFDC, confirming that each Town and Parish Council would be offered one day free parking to help celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and it was agreed 3 June 2022 in New Milton to tie in with the Town's main Platinum Jubilee event on the Friday Bank Holiday, that proved a great success.

Cllr G Blunden referred to a recent Youth report that ASBOC had reopened and were providing outreach work on the Recreation Ground. It remains crucial that this work continues to ensure the right approach is taken covering youth services in New Milton. Julia Stamper representing NMRA reported that she was very pleased to see the draft Vision Plan for Fawcetts Field especially as a Community Garden had been included.

**At our 27<sup>th</sup> June meeting**, Inspector Ord presented an update on the New Forest West Neighbourhoods Team and reported on the latest unauthorised encampment at Osborne Road car park, following an earlier one at Crossmead Avenue car park. NFDC served Section 77 papers, and travellers then moved on to Highcliffe car park. Security barriers were subsequently installed at local car parks to deter incursions.

On 14 June, I attended a Remembrance Service commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Falklands conflict with local veterans of that campaign assembled at the War Memorial on the Recreation Ground together with families and friends who supported the Armed Forces. This was a special commemorative event, to remember all those 255 service personnel who lost their lives in that 74-day conflict in 1982.

On 29 May, I hosted the Platinum Jubilee Civic Service at St Mary Magdalene Parish Church, and I was particularly pleased to receive the following letter from the Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, that was read out on 27<sup>th</sup> June:

*“It was a great pleasure to come to St Mary Magdalene’s yesterday and join New Milton’s celebration of the Platinum Jubilee. The service was a wonderful and happy occasion, and I thought the Rector’s sermon was excellent, and delivered with great effect – he perfectly captured the enormity of Her Majesty’s service to the nation as our Sovereign and the incredible example that it sets for us all. It was a privilege to be with you for the occasion, and may I thank you for your kind hospitality afterwards at tea.”*

The Town Development Manager presented a positive report that provided updates on the Neighbourhood Plan, the on-going success of the socially prescribed cookery courses, and in particular the launch of the M & S Foodhall appeared to be having a beneficial impact, with increases in the Town’s footfall. There was also increased usage of the Town Council’s websites at this time, with Platinum Jubilee events being well attended, visitors flocking to the town following the pandemic and lockdowns.

**At our 8<sup>th</sup> August meeting**, we heard that the Managing Director of Morebus had reinstated some Yellow Bus service routes but services to New Milton, in particular the 1a service, would only be continuing as far as Christchurch, not New Milton. We also heard from local HCC Cllr Mel Kendal that the County Council was facing an uphill battle in terms of the budget required to provide the current level of service and over the next 2 years there would be a £200m shortfall. One loss will be the Congo service.

Regarding the Ashley Recreation Ground enhancement scheme, Cllr Blunden reported that Sport England had withdrawn its objection to the planning application therefore planning permission had been granted with minor conditions attached. The scheme would need to be re-costed due to inflation and increased building costs. The Town Clerk reported recent Chewton Glen musical concerts realised £15k revenue for the use of Fawcetts Field / Moore Close with £10k for Michael Buble and £5k for McFly.

At our August meeting, I reported that the organisers of New Forest Pride event had yet to reach an agreement with NFDC Safety Advisory Group (SAG) regarding whether the event would need to be fenced. While Members expressed support for the event on 20 August 2022, it was generally agreed the Recreation Ground in the centre of town did not lend itself to such an event. At the meeting, it was resolved that no fencing of events would be allowed on the War Memorial Recreation Ground.

**At our 3<sup>rd</sup> October meeting**, Police Sergeant Andy Gwyer presented an update on the New Forest West Neighbourhood Team. The team currently comprised 3 police officers, 3 PCSO’s and a recently qualified student. In the next couple of months 1 Constable and 1 PCSO would be joining the team and PS Arron Wood would be taking over responsibility for the New Milton team. I thanked P-S Gwyer for his update.

Professor Catharine Gale delivered a presentation regarding Swifts – birds who need our help. She reported that the swift population is in decline across the UK mainly due to the reduction in insects as a result of habitat loss and loss of nest places due to demolition, roof repairs, renovations and the installation of UPVC soffits/fascias. She highlighted what we can do in our own homes to help swifts including putting up swift boxes/bricks. I then thanked Professor Gale for her interesting presentation.

Some projects take time. I updated Cllrs on progress the opening of a Co-Op at Barton, and still do, and in regard the No 1 New Milton Project, having met with representatives of Network Rail from Glasgow and York to look at drainage issues at the site, it appears this project is further delayed pending long-term monitoring of the Victorian building. On a more positive note, Members resolved that the Town Council sponsor the New Milton Poppy Appeal for 2022 and agreed a sum of £300.00 to the local RBL branch.

**At our 15<sup>th</sup> November meeting,** I thanked the Town Clerk and his team for coordinating the arrangements for the Remembrance Sunday Parade, Act of Remembrance, and Remembrance Service. The event was very well-attended, fine weather prevailed, and our ground staff organised the road closures between them. There was an excellent turnout from local residents, estimated at over 500, and the Band marched up the high street for the first time since the Covid pandemic.

The Town Clerk reported on correspondence with Cllr Edward Heron at HCC regarding the reduction in funding for the Cango Bus service, that is likely to result in a reduced service. The C32/C33 New Milton to Lymington ceasing at 2.45pm on weekdays and on Saturdays. A further meeting with interested parties is planned for 6 March, but the booking service is due to cease at the end of May.

Sgt Arron Wood provided an update on the current spate of burglaries and the Police response to the situation. Sgt Wood was concerned about the vulnerability of some businesses who needed advice. Sgt Wood also reiterated the necessity for any incidents to be reported via 101 as this will ensure it is recorded and responded to as necessary. Emergency situations to be dealt with by calling 999.

Cllr Murrow reported on the New Forest Mencap AGM that he attended the previous evening, highlighting the important services they provide. Also acknowledging the staff team they are building in strengthening their position going forward. There was also a plea from Mencap to attract more Volunteers to assist at their clubs and Trustees to support their committee.

**At our 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 meeting,** Town Council held a minute's silence to remember Cllr Alan Rice who passed away suddenly outside his house on 15 December 2022. I reported the Town Clerk had been in touch with HCC who will be recognising Alan's service at their full County Council meeting on Thursday 23 February 2023 when there will be an opportunity for those Members who knew Alan to offer their tributes. They will also arrange for their flag at Elizabeth II Court in Winchester to be flown at half-mast from sunrise to sunset on the day of the funeral. The Town Council did likewise.

Cllr S Davies reported that he was attending a meeting of the environmental panel the following day and that the timetable for the waste strategy would be changed due to delays at the proposed Eastleigh plant and implementation delayed a year. Cllr Clarke thanked Cllrs D Hawkins and A Reid for attending the District Council Planning meeting relating to the Brockhills development. The matter is still ongoing by way of consultation regarding traffic matters.

Cllr A O' Sullivan reported on his involvement with Forest Arts Centre. He advised that the organisation appears to be going from strength to strength at the moment.

Cllr V Schooling asked for further details on the Shared Prosperity Fund (Levelling Up grant) bid by New Forest District Council. The Town Development Manager advised that NFDC is considering various projects, Cllr G Blunden advised that our share of any monies which NFDC succeed in obtaining is likely to be small.

I am pleased to say that following exhaustive discussions, the Town Council approved next years' budget and precept as follows:

**The 2023/24 budget of £1,279,891 was accepted and a precept of £1,246,391 was approved - using £33,500 from Reserves. The Town Council element of Council Tax will be £117.32 next year for average Band "D" properties in New Milton.**

**At our meeting held on 3 February 2023**, we received an email from Jo Braid-Brown, NFDC Elections Project Officer, with guidance and timetable for the Local Elections being held on Thursday 4 May 2023. Also, a map of revised ward boundaries.

Cllr S Davies joined NFDC Coastal Team and the Beach Huts Owners Association on inspection visits to Hordle Cliff and Milford on Sea and noted the increasing level of cliff erosion. He also reported on visiting the Exxon Refinery at Fawley, the largest in Europe, and meeting with Exxon management. Cllr Davies asked if the Annual Towns Meeting on Monday 20 March would be affected by the pre-election period (Purdah).

Cllr G Blunden attended the local PCC Panel receiving a presentation from the PCC justifying the increase in precept of £15 per household. This increase will go towards recruitment of 50 extra police, in addition to the current recruitment of 600 police officers. The challenges of the national 101 call centres were noted and the improvements required across the country.

Cllr A O'Sullivan referred to engagements undertaken in his role as NFDC Chairman, attending the funeral of Graham Parkes, former councillor at Hythe & Dibden, and the funeral of our own Cllr Alan Rice at St Mary Magdalene Church last Friday that was well attended. Cllr A O'Sullivan reported on the Hampshire Cultural Trust restructuring programme which included Forest Arts New Milton. Activities and events will carry on.

Cllr S Clarke referred to the outcome of the application for land east of Brockhills Lane being granted at NFDC Planning. There will be a public consultation about the traffic management plan which will involve the developers, NMTC Cllrs & Officer input. Cllr Clarke advised that Speed Watch may return to the town and a potential Speed Watch Coordinator would get in touch with Police regarding the initiative.

Cllr B Murrow reported that the Canteleu Tall Ships Festival takes place from 8 June and councillors are welcome to attend. Further details will be shared in due course. As Chairman, I mentioned the continuing development of the Co-op store in Barton which is taking its time.

In conclusion, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to be Mayor and Chairman of this Council, and I would like to thank my Councillor colleagues and staff for all their hard work and support throughout the last two years. I look forward to working with you all again hopefully after local elections on 4 May 2023.

As re-elected Mayor, I was very pleased that **Scarf New Forest**, and **Parkinson's Dance** based at the Forest Arts Centre continued as my nominated charities.

**Scarf** (**S**upporting **C**hildren with **A**dditional needs, **R**elatives, and **F**riends) is a parent-led charity based in the New Forest, organising term-time and holiday activities for children/young people with special needs and their families. Scarf's core belief, and a belief that the Mayor fully supports, is that all children and young people should have access to high quality, stimulating and exciting opportunities.

**The Forest Arts Centre** in New Milton facilitate a **Parkinson's Dance Programme**, including **dance classes** and **well-being** sessions for those in our community living with Parkinson's. The Parkinson's Dance Programme has been subject to a long-term study which has evaluated the benefits of dancing on participants. The study clearly demonstrates that as well as a physical benefit there is also an enhanced emotional benefit and confirms that this can improve with regular dancing over a period of time.

In continuing to support these two charities: ***"I wanted to help young and old alike, and these two charities represent those in need at both ends of the age spectrum, so I am delighted to have them as my joint, local charities again this year."***

As Mayor, I wished to highlight continuing awareness of these two very worthy causes, and by fund-raising as well, I very much hope to sustain the benefit these charities bring to those individuals and their friends, families, and carers.



## **ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2023**

### **Planning Committee – Cllr S J Clarke**

This Committee has delegated power from the Town Council to provide comments on all applications for development and works to protected trees, in turn influencing the Local Planning Authority (New Forest District Council or National Park Authority) in their determination of the applications. The Committee also respond to consultations regarding planning policy affecting the town plus issues of highways, utilities and other infrastructure. The Committee usually meets in the Town Hall on alternate Thursday evenings, but on occasion moves to a Tuesday.

	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
N.F.D.C Planning	214	202
National Park Planning	21	19
Trees	54	67

In the last year there have been key applications for the town as below –

- Land of Ashley Manor Farm – Gravel extraction application yet to be resolved by Hampshire County Council.(HCC ref NF176)
- Land east of Brockhills Lane - A strategic site for 164 dwellings, first discussed in 2020, and resolved by New Forest District Council at their February 2023 meeting, with highway safety issues yet to be fully addressed. (Application 21/11179)
- Land south of Gore Road – A strategic site for 178 dwellings which the Town Council generally supported but has not yet been determined by New Forest District Council. (Application 22/10418)

Consultations that the committee has taken part in include Hampshire County Council's Minerals and Waste Plan Partial update, which included a site proposal study for Ashley Manor Farm, plus a Flood and Water Catchment Management Plan. New Forest District Council documents included a supplementary planning document on Air Quality and Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy.

In terms of the Neighbourhood Plan, there has been positive move regarding a new facility. A Youth and Family Hub in Gore Road is currently proceeding through the outline (in principle) planning process with New Forest District Council. It would be located to the rear of Milton Barn, adjacent a housing development of 17 affordable homes which is pending permission also. The Hub is to replace the County Council's closed Phoenix Centre and provide other services for the whole community. The application is due to be decided by 10 March. The Neighbourhood Plan work is now in the remit of Chiara Rabbito, having seen Suna King retire late last year and will require renewed focus to deliver other projects within it.

I thank my fellow Committee members and officers Theresa Elliott and Joy Bean for their on-going support.

## **ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2022-23**

### **Amenities Report - Cllr G R Blunden**

At the start of each year, I like to remind members of Amenities' Terms of Reference below:

***Promote leisure activities and facilities which shall include maintenance of public recreation grounds, parks, sports fields, open spaces, allotment sites, flower/shrub beds, bus shelters and similar areas which are the responsibility of the Council.***

***As appropriate, monitor, liaise, advise and where necessary arrange activities or functions connected with powers relating to entertainment, the arts, welfare services, public library, and tourism. This shall include recommendations for financial assistance.***

***Decision to allow or refuse events on the War Memorial Recreation Ground in Whitefield Road (specifically) is delegated to the Amenities Chairman (or Vice) and the Town Clerk (or Assistant).***

***Monitor the provision and maintenance of all outdoor recreational sports and similar amenity services in the town area and make recommendations on these aspects as appropriate, to the Council or other responsible authority.***

***Be responsible for the provision of street markets and all aspects associated with it.***

***Be responsible for the provision and/or maintenance of public seats, litter bins and footpaths which are the recognised responsibility of the Council.***

It is important to keep the above in mind when considering the work of Amenities Committee.

**At our April meeting**, the Town Clerk referred to the following items of correspondence:

- Email from Dean Brunton of NFDC confirming our claim for Covid signage from 2020 had finally been approved by Govt and payment of £7,929 was received in May 2022.
- Email from Dean Brunton of NFDC advising that £265k S.106 funds for the Ashley project would be handed over in full to the Town Council, received in September 2022.

Jill Colclough, Landscape Architect presented the Draft Vision Plan for Fawcetts Field / Moore Close site identifying long-term demands on the space to football, appropriate cycle/walking routes, BMX pump track, play provision and Community Garden. There was general support and enthusiasm for the Vision Plan. Timescale for completion not being available at present. By its very nature, a Vision Plan is a long-term guidance document, not a project in itself.

The Communications Officer provided an update on the Council's / Queen's Platinum Jubilee:

- Installation of 7 x Jubilee Commemorative Benches
- Installation of a Rose Garden Pergola featuring Platinum Jubilee crest
- Platinum Jubilee Civic Service on Sunday 29 May
- Planting trees for the Queen's Green Canopy
- Jubilee themed window display competition

Arrangements for the Community Event on 2 June to be held on the Rec were well underway.

**At our meeting on 30 May 2022**, Councillor Alan O' Sullivan provided an update on the costs of the proposed MENCAP Mural on Boots Wall opposite KFC, initially estimated at £7,000, was adjusted down to £5,000. Some District Councillors have already pledged up to £2,500 and hopefully a further £2,000 can be obtained from HCC Cllrs. ***The £5,150 cost of this project was covered by County and District Councillors community grant contributions.***

The Communications Officer confirmed the Platinum Jubilee Civic Service held at St Mary Magdalene Parish Church on Sunday 29 May 2022 was well attended, by among others the Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, the local MP and newly elected NFDC Chairman. It was noted, there will be free car parking in the NFDC town centre car parks on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June (excluding Crossmead Avenue car park that remains closed due to travellers).

The Chairman spoke of the many challenges in organising the main Jubilee event on Friday and Saturday. The Town Council had offered support to the Lions with a grant of £3,500 and had been working closely with them to ensure the success and safety of the event. Our ground staff agreed to work over the Bank Holiday weekend and with this further assistance, the Town Council provided over £5,000 by way of a commitment and support of this Lions' event.

The Town Clerk advised that last year's overspend of £18k under the Tree Work budget was mainly due to the unexpectedly severe storms in October and February. He further advised that F&GP would be asked to approve a virement of £14k from the unused Ash Tree dieback budget to cover that, plus a £16k virement from Youth Co-ordination Budget to Salaries & Wages to cover the cost of Youth Workers last year.

The Estates Manager explained that the rough, untended land around KFC had been a problem for a while. Contact had been established with the landowners and they agreed to give permission for the Town Council to make improvements, to take it over and to plant it up with flowers. Some preparatory work was undertaken, and that area of land looks great now.

The Town Clerk confirmed that a new lease had been prepared by Anthony Harris and the Bowling Club will now maintain their own greens. They are also taking over the garage, together with contents and replacing them as and when required, as part of sports clubs taking over their own maintenance. Sports clubs will have to pay for replacement equipment in future.

**At our meeting on 12 July**, in regard to the proposed Community Garden at Fawcetts Field, adjacent to the Moore Close site, the Chairman confirmed that there had been a good meeting with the working group, that the group had drawn up a plan which had now been enhanced with the addition of an orchard of trees to the south of the garden. Two matters to consider were the 10-year licence recommended by Anthony Harris and the provision of water services to the site, The estimated cost for the water is £2,000 and the trees c.£2,000 Total £4k plus VAT. **The Council earmarked up to £5,000 for Community Garden from CIL monies.**

**At our 6 September meeting**, Cllr S Clarke referred to a lady issuing free dog poo bags at Ballard Water Meadow saying this had been a very good project and was to be commended, that the volume of dog poo on Ballard Water Meadow had reduced considerably from around 200 deposits at one stage to just a handful. Cllr Clarke went on to advise that he had been approached by the lady concerned in his role as an NFDC councillor and was planning to give her a small grant to cover the cost of the bags from his NFDC allowance.

The Town Clerk referred to a recent meeting with HCC officers regarding the new footbridge. The project had no funding at the present time, would not start before May 2023 and the costs have risen by 40% since inception 12 years ago. The work would take 6 months once started, but while the state of the existing bridge is unsightly, it was not deemed unsafe by HCC. Cllr C Ward referred to the overgrown areas behind the chain link fence and asked the Estates Manager why we don't just weed them. Mark Jeffries advised that some parts are inaccessible without closing the line down. HCC referred to it as part of a "rewilding" scheme.

The Town Clerk circulated information about the role of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). Cllr S Clarke was concerned that the Town Council was not invited to meetings with SAG in relation to the Jubilee event and felt the Town Council should have been there. The Chairman advised that so far as New Forest Pride was concerned, Town Council representatives had attended, and representation from the Town Council should be there for future events. The Town Clerk had suggested to SAG that landowners should be automatically included.



The Chairman suggested that a small Working Party be set up to consider the lessons learned from the two large external events – the Jubilee event and New Forest Pride which had taken place this year on the Recreation Ground. The Working Party would review the licencing arrangements for future events. A Working Party was set up to consider future events on the War Memorial Recreation Ground, and a revised Licence was recently agreed with NFDC that will help facilitate future running of events on the War Memorial Recreation Ground.

The Town Clerk referred to the response to HCC Consultation from the Chairman of the Cango Users' Forum which had been previously circulated, having completed the online consultation relating to proposed changes to services on behalf of the Town Council and referred to this document as it was well written and made excellent points. The Chairman concluded by expressing concern that the service is insufficiently promoted, but that it represents a great service for residents who do not have access to other transport or funds for taxis and so on.

**At our 17 October meeting**, Mandy Hayes as a representative of Friends of Ballard Water Meadow mentioned the PUPS group (Pick up Poo Squad) wished to thank Cllr Clarke and NFDC for contributions they had received from them towards poo bags. They estimated that if they had not intervened there would have been around 1,000 dog poos on the meadow, rotting and poisoning the land. She was concerned that the Council want to remove short-term signage from the gates and fences, mentioning PUPS put up a weekly total which many visitors to the site found interesting and engaging.

The Chairman thanked the Ballard Meadow volunteers and the New Forest litter pickers for all their efforts. He suggested that the best way forward in relation to the signage issues would be a site meeting. The Town Council could not provide two heritage boards. He congratulated the PUPS on their good works and stated that there is a fine balance between encouraging dog owners to pick up the poo and enforcing it, providing bags could be seen as taking the onus off the dog owners to buy bags for themselves and take responsibility.

Bob Lord spoke about his voluntary role as Ranger of Barton Common. He advised that he had been working on habitat management and had engaged the assistance of two students to help. A botanical expert had attended the site for two days, and an insect survey had been commissioned. He further advised that volunteers had put in 150-man hours since February. He went on to thank the Town Council for buying PPE and hand tools for the volunteers.

The Chairman was pleased to hear that the Town Council had funded the hand tools and PPE for Bob Lord and his group and that 150 volunteer hours was brilliant. He also thanked Bob for his comments about the incorrect plant labelling on the Ballard board and asked the Estates Manager to check if it was too late to change it. Estates Manager confirmed it was not too late.

**On 28 November**, The Communications Officer referred to the Green Infrastructure slide presentation, highlighting some of the main points made. NFDC had reviewed New Milton as a pilot study and considered some aspects relating to the green infrastructure. They had given recommendations based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Jill Colclough from NFDC advised that so far as the GI is concerned, New Milton is a test area and they will be bringing forward a strategy for the whole of the built-up area.

The Town Clerk referred to the Schedule of Fees & Charges 2023/24, which had previously been circulated and advised that the second version had been prepared with a 10% uplift due to inflation. Inflation is quite unpredictable at the moment, and a 5% increase was deemed inadequate. **Revised Fees & Charges for 2023/24 were then recommended for endorsement by the F&GP Committee at its meeting on 19 December 2022.**

The Town Clerk then referred to the Amenities Committee Budget for 2023-24, in the sum of £674,304 which had previously been circulated. The Town Clerk advised that the budget for Xmas lights had been increased by 10% for next year, in line with current inflation. A sum of £45,000 has been budgeted for work at Ballard Lake which is to be drained and the fish removed and relocated elsewhere. ***It was then recommended that the Amenities Budget for 2023/24 be endorsed by the F&GP Committee at its meeting on 19 December 2022.***

The Town Clerk advised on an online meeting with Sway, Hordle and HCC on Wednesday morning about the future of CANGO and we will likely be asked if the Town Council will put the £2k they contribute to the booking service into a scheduled bus service (for example to extend its route where there are no pavements). It was envisaged that the booking service is likely to cease at the financial year end.

The Town Clerk said that he will report back at the next F&GP meeting, or possibly via a post meeting note in the minutes of this meeting, noting **a) There will be 3 services a day Mon - Fri from June, with the last bus scheduled to return from Lymington at 2.25pm, but only as far as Sway Station where the service will terminate at 2.45pm. b) There will be no Saturday service. c) CANGO Booking will cease 30 May. d) The service will then be run as a fixed route / scheduled service.**

At our last meeting on 23 January 2023, the Chairman advised that the King's Coronation Working Party had met with various groups in New Milton including the WI, Lions and Round Table. The meeting had been very positive, and plans are being made for events on 6 May. Cllr A O' Sullivan referred to the recent information which had been put out by Buckingham Palace, there was some suggestion that Sunday is the day for celebrations and street parties. The Town Clerk said the plan at present is to hold the celebration on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the day of the Coronation, to allow people living on their own and without families to attend.

Jill Colclough presented her proposals for woodland management and improvements to Ashington Park, being public open space adjacent to the Tesco store. This scheme falls under the NFDC Mitigation plan and will be funded from CIL monies paid to NFDC. Jill referred to the draft layout that she produced, and which was displayed. She advised that there are three aspects to the plan. This is all covered in phase 1.

- a) Improving facilities including the footpath and cutting back vegetation along it.
- b) Introducing a more minor route, a circular pathway with seats.
- c) Some woodland management to open up the open space.

The Chairman welcomed James Gilfillan from NFDC Planning who is the case officer in relation to the development at Gore Road. He provided an overview of the situation. He said he has no influence in relation to the Fawcetts Field Vision Plan but hoped he could persuade developers to make contributions to assist with funding aspects of the plan. The Chairman thanked James for coming and stated that he was not looking for any particular update at this time save in relation to the felling of trees at Moore Close as there was a small window of opportunity for this to take place this year.

James went on to talk about the play areas which will form part of the plan. He said that all age groups need to be covered and that in the case of very young children the areas need to be close to their homes. There are to be 160-170 new dwellings, and while there will not be any requirement for full football pitches or other large facilities, he would expect that the developers would make contributions towards them.

I would like to thank everyone involved in providing these amenities, and actively promoting our town.

## ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2022-23

### F&GP REPORT – Cllr D N TUNGATE

The Finance and General Purposes Committee has overall control of Council finance and personnel functions and makes the final recommendation regarding the annual precept. It also has a role in considering Government proposals affecting local government finances, and reports received from our Internal Auditors.

**Budget** discussions began in October 2022 and the 2023-24 Budget was recommended by F&GP on 19 December 2022 in the sum of £1,279,891. This was subsequently agreed and a **Precept** £1,246,391 was approved by Town Council on 3 January 2023 using £33,500 from Reserves to peg back the overall increase in precept to 5%, in line with many councils. New Milton average Band D council tax compares favourably with other New Forest local councils.

F&GP follows a strict **Work Plan**, ensuring financial performance is continually reviewed and monitored in a timely way by Accountants, Internal and External Auditors. Reports are submitted and considered by members at regular 6-weekly intervals to ensure the Town Council remains within budget and complies with accounting conventions.

F&GP also has a remit for overseeing **Youth Work** in the town following closure of the Phoenix Youth Centre by Hampshire County Council some 5 years ago. The Town Council is currently recruiting for a replacement Youth Coordinator to work directly with young people in partnership with Youth Workers and other organisations. Helping in the planning, delivering and evaluation of youth activities and services, one of the key tasks is to work directly with young people and other organisations in helping to deliver a replacement youth centre in order to provide and develop a suitable facility for young people within the town. This involved setting up a suitable charity to help the project to fruition.

The Town Council uses an updated **Risk Assessment** software program to help identify and assess potential risks. The program covers up to 50 risk areas from allotments to web-sites and identifies over 300 potential risks facing town councils. Some risks such as burial grounds / cemeteries do not apply to New Milton, but out of 43 relevant risk areas applicable, potential risks were identified under 37 headings. An Action Plan was drawn up detailing potential risks including **CANGO** funding, implications of running weekend events, ensuring adequate CCTV measures are in place, planning and providing new youth and family HUB facilities in the town.

Administration of **Grant Aid** is also the responsibility of this Committee and this financial year so far 9 grants amounting to £4,320 have been awarded so far from a budget of £5,000. No Youth Grants have been applied for so far this year, due to volunteer organisations pulling back from youth service provision, although **ASBOC** have funded some work with 11-13 and 14-17year old youths on Tuesday and Friday evenings recently, from funds awarded in 2019. The Lions Club were separately granted £3,000 in total for Xmas event from the Community Events budget, and CAB were awarded £5,000. Town Council sponsored the 2022 Poppy Appeal locally in the sum of £300 last November. A total of £12,620 (Budget: £25,000).

F&GP oversees calls on **Reserves, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, S.106** Developers' Contributions to help fund Capital Expenditure (CAPEX), and on 30 January 2023 F&GP recommended that a quote for £186.5k to complete the Ashley improvements project be accepted - with £46.5k coming from residue of s.106 funds - and that a £140k shortfall be funded from CIL monies in the sum of £80k and reserves in the sum of up to £60k.

As noted above, the F&GP remit is both wide and varied. As we reach the end of this administration, I would like to thank all my Cllr colleagues and staff for their contributions.

# New Forest Association of Local Councils

## ANNUAL REVIEW – 2022/23

Cllr George Bisson from Lyndhurst Parish Council was unanimously re-elected Chairman of NFALC at its AGM on 14 July 2022 at the Council Chamber, Appletree Court in Lyndhurst

At its **AGM on 14 July 2022**, the Chairman introduced and very much welcomed **Kate Ryan**, the Chief Executive of NFDC. Kate had then been in post over 6 months and was pleased to attend her first NFALC meeting and was delighted to join New Forest District Council leading their ambitious agenda to deliver excellent services and opportunities for the residents of the New Forest. Kate previously worked as Strategic Director at Poole for Place, then Chief Operating Officer at BCP Council, bringing together four Council's services through Local Government Review.

Kate met with clerks and others from 10 local councils by way of a **Welcome Event** on 30 March 2022, where she explained her new role and objectives for NFDC's future. Kate referred to new measures to deal with the climate emergency that have been approved by NFDC. Cabinet agreed new measures aimed at cutting CO2 emissions, improving climate resilience, and safeguarding the environment, following its declaration of a climate and nature emergency in 2021.

NFDC recently undertook a **Residents Survey**, asking what they think of current services, what they would like to see by way of neighbourhood services, future growth from a pared down authority comprising 48 Cllrs from next year, rather than the present 60 members. NFDC are also looking at training and development of staff, new ways of hybrid working, consultation, engagement with local residents. Kate will be the Returning Officer for elections on 4 May 2023.

Steve Avery, Executive Director the New Forest National Park Authority, announced NFDC with support from partners are looking at the feasibility of making **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** to address persistent 'anti-social' behaviour and misuse of the Forest. The campaign to ban disposable BBQs and stop petting and feeding of commoners' animals in the New Forest will be helped by PSPOs.

At our **20 October 2022 meeting**, Cllr Michael Harris, Portfolio Holder for Business, Tourism & High Streets referred to several new initiatives by NFDC in support of the local economy and its high streets. For example, NFDC recently purchased a purpose-built supermarket in New Milton town centre (M&S) as part of its approach to investment in the local economy. The newly refurbished store is leased to and occupied by Marks and Spencer Food. Having been empty for many years since it was a Co-Op, NFDC were extremely keen to see this site be brought back into use.

Also at our October meeting, we heard New Forest District Council leader, Cllr Edward Heron had written to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in response to the call for expressions of interest to become an **Investment Zone** which was announced by government on 24 September 2022. The letter reiterates that as a partner in the **Solent Freeport**, New Forest District Council is keen to secure the greatest benefits for their residents, as well as the local area.

At our **2 February 2023 meeting**, NPA set out their concerns on the **Investment Zone** proposals as discussed at the October Authority meeting in a letter to the Secretary of State and it was subsequently decided by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement not to take them forward. **Solent Freeport** was finally launched in December and NPA are maintaining contact with its Board to ensure ongoing focus on the green pledges contained within the bid and to secure benefits for the Forest and its communities.

Kate Ryan, NFDC Chief Executive referred to the recent **Residents Survey** results, as follows:

**Reputation** – NFDC scored significantly higher than the LGA average with 78% with the way NFDC.  
**Service satisfaction** - Top-rated services were registering to vote (96%), community recycling banks (90%), garden waste collection (88%), health & leisure centres (87%) waste & recycling services (83%).  
**Internet use** - Over 9 in 10 residents (93%) cite they personally use the internet at home.  
**Community safety** - Nearly all residents (96%) report feeling very or fairly safe in their local area. Around three-quarters (73%) of residents' report feeling very or fairly safe after dark.

Kate expressed some concern at a couple of results, as below:

**Climate change** - Three quarters (75%) of residents' report feeling very or somewhat worried about the impact of climate change. Most (91%) reported using less energy at home.

**Household finances** - Nearly two-thirds (62%) of residents report their financial situation in the last 12 months getting a little or a lot worse. Although 59% report their financial position as very or relatively comfortable, 34% report they are just about managing.

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES – WAR MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND**  
**(CHARITY NO. 301891) FOR THE YEAR ENDED - 31 MARCH 2023**

As reported in the local New Milton Advertiser & Times newspaper at the time, thousands of visitors flocked to the New Milton Lions' Easter Extravaganza on 16 April to enjoy one of the town's first major public event since the pandemic ended.



**Crowds of up to 4,000 visitors were thought to have attended (photo Steve West)**

Other well-attended events included various Sunday Afternoons of Music under the Performance Pavilion, Skatepark Competition, Youth Music & Cultural Festival plus New Forest Pride Event that took place on 20 August that attracted 1,000+.

Remembrance events proved ever popular, with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the Falklands War on 14 June, Armistice Day on Friday 11 November, and Remembrance Sunday on 13 November that saw the return of the Marching Band.



Preparations are currently in hand for a Community Celebration of King Charles III Coronation on Saturday 6 May 2023, with the televised event being shown live on a Big Screen on the War Memorial Recreation Ground together with refreshments.